



Sweltering streets



A homeless encampment grows in size just west of downtown Friday, May 20, 2022, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

Hundreds of homeless die in extreme heat

By ANITA SNOW
Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — Hundreds of blue, green and grey tents are pitched under the sun's searing rays in downtown Phoenix, a jumble of flimsy canvas and plastic along dusty sidewalks. Here, in the hottest big city in America, thousands of homeless people swelter as the summer's triple digit temperatures

arrive. The stifling tent city has ballooned amid pandemic-era evictions and surging rents that have dumped hundreds more people onto the sizzling streets that grow eerily quiet when temperatures peak in the midafternoon. A heat wave earlier this month brought temperatures of up to 114 degrees (45.5 Celsius) - and it's only June. Highs reached 118 degrees

(47.7 Celsius) last year. "During the summer, it's pretty hard to find a place at night that's cool enough to sleep without the police running you off," said Chris Medlock, a homeless Phoenix man known on the streets as "T-Bone" who carries everything he owns in a small backpack and often beds down in a park or a nearby desert preserve to avoid the crowds. "If a kind soul

could just offer a place on their couch indoors maybe more people would live," Medlock said at a dining room where homeless people can get some shade and a free meal. Excessive heat causes more weather-related deaths in the United States than hurricanes, flooding and tornadoes combined.

Continued on page 2

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Hundreds of homeless die in extreme heat

Continued from Front

Around the country, heat contributes to some 1,500 deaths annually, and advocates estimate about half of those people are homeless.

Temperatures are rising nearly everywhere because of global warming, combining with brutal drought in some places to create more intense, frequent and longer heat waves. The past few summers have been some of the hottest on record.

Just in the county that includes Phoenix, at least 130 homeless people were among the 339 individuals who died from heat-associated causes in 2021.

"If 130 homeless people were dying in any other way it would be considered a mass casualty event," said Kristie L. Ebi, a professor of global health at the University of Washington.

It's a problem that stretches across the United States, and now, with rising global temperatures, heat is no longer a danger just in places like Phoenix.

This summer will likely bring above-normal temperatures over most land areas worldwide, according to a seasonal map that volunteer climatologists created for the International Research Institute at Columbia University.

Last summer, a heat wave blasted the normally temperate U.S. Northwest and had Seattle residents sleeping in their yards and on roofs, or fleeing to hotels with air conditioning. Across the state, several people presumed to be homeless died outdoors, including a man slumped behind a gas station.

In Oregon, officials opened



Jim Baker, who oversees that dining room for the St. Vincent de Paul charity, sits in the dining room after dinner Wednesday, April 27, 2022, in Phoenix.

Associated Press

24-hour cooling centers for the first time. Volunteer teams fanned out with water and popsicles to homeless encampments on Portland's outskirts.

A quick scientific analysis concluded last year's Pacific Northwest heat wave was virtually impossible without human-caused climate change adding several degrees and toppling previous records.

Even Boston is exploring ways to protect diverse neighborhoods like its Chinatown, where population density and few shade trees help drive temperatures up to 106 degrees (41 Celsius) some summer days. The city plans strategies like increasing tree canopy and other kinds of shade, using cooler materials for roofs, and expanding its network of cooling centers during heat waves.

It's not just a U.S. problem. An Associated Press analysis last year of a dataset published by the Columbia University's climate school found exposure to extreme heat has tripled and now affects about a quarter of the world's population.

This spring, an extreme heat wave gripped much of Pakistan and India, where homelessness is widespread

due to discrimination and insufficient housing. The high in Jacobabad, Pakistan near the border with India hit 122 degrees (50 Celsius) in May.

Dr. Dileep Mavalankar, who heads the Indian Institute of Public Health in the western Indian city Gandhinagar, said because of poor reporting it's unknown how many die in the country from heat exposure.

Summertime cooling centers for homeless, elderly and other vulnerable populations have opened in several European countries each summer since a heat wave killed 70,000 people across Europe in 2003.

Emergency service workers on bicycles patrol Madrid's streets, distributing ice packs and water in the hot months. Still, some 1,300 people, most of them elderly, continue to die in Spain each summer because of health complications exacerbated by excess heat.

Spain and southern France last week sweltered through unusually hot weather for mid-June, with temperatures hitting 104 degrees (40 Celsius) in some areas. Climate scientist David Hondula, who heads Phoenix's new office for heat mitigation, says that with such

extreme weather now seen around the world, more solutions are needed to protect the vulnerable, especially homeless people who are about 200 times more likely than sheltered individuals to die from heat-associated causes.

"As temperatures continue to rise across the U.S. and the world, cities like Seattle, Minneapolis, New York or Kansas City that don't have the experience or infrastructure for dealing with heat have to adjust as well."

In Phoenix, officials and advocates hope a vacant building recently converted into a 200-bed shelter for homeless people will help save lives this summer. Mac Mais, 34, was among the first to move in.

"It can be rough. I stay in the shelters or anywhere I can find," said Mais who has been homeless on and off since he was a teen. "Here, I can stay out actually rest, work on job applications, stay out of the heat." In Las Vegas, teams deliver bottled water to homeless people living in encampments around the county and inside a network of underground storm drains under the Las Vegas strip.

Ahmedabad, India, popu-

lation 8.4 million, was the first South Asian city to design a heat action plan in 2013.

Through its warning system, nongovernmental groups reach out to vulnerable people and send text messages to mobile phones. Water tankers are dispatched to slums, while bus stops, temples and libraries become shelters for people to escape the blistering rays.

Still, the deaths pile up.

Kimberly Rae Haws, a 62-year-old homeless woman, was severely burned in October 2020 while sprawled for an unknown amount of time on a sizzling Phoenix blacktop. The cause of her subsequent death was never investigated.

A young man nicknamed Twitch died from heat exposure as he sat on a curb near a Phoenix soup kitchen in the hours before it opened one weekend in 2018.

"He was supposed to move into permanent housing the next Monday," said Jim Baker, who oversees that dining room for the St. Vincent de Paul charity. "His mother was devastated."

Many such deaths are never confirmed as heat related and aren't always noticed because of the stigma of homelessness and lack of connection to family.

When a 62-year-old mentally ill woman named Shawna Wright died last summer in a hot alley in Salt Lake City, her death only became known when her family published an obituary saying the system failed to protect her during the hottest July on record, when temperatures reached the triple digits.

Her sister, Tricia Wright, said making it easier for homeless people to get permanent housing would go a long way toward protecting them from extreme summertime temperatures. "We always thought she was tough, that she could get through it," Tricia Wright said of her sister. "But no one is tough enough for that kind of heat." □



Biden says decision on gas tax holiday may come this week

By AAMER MADHANI
and JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

REHOBOTH BEACH, Del.

(AP) — President Joe Biden said Monday that he will decide by the end of the week whether to order a holiday on the federal gasoline tax, possibly saving U.S. consumers as much as 18.4 cents a gallon.

"Yes, I'm considering it," Biden told reporters after taking a walk along the beach near his vacation home in Delaware. "I hope to have a decision based on the data — I'm looking for by the end of the week." The administration is increasingly looking for ways to spare the public from higher prices at the pump, which began to climb last year and surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in February. Gas prices nationwide are averaging just under \$5 a gallon, according to AAA.

Biden said members of his team were to meet this week with CEOs of the major oil companies to discuss rising prices. Biden lashed out at oil companies, saying they are making excessive profits when people are feeling the crunch of skyrocketing costs at the pump and inflation. But Biden said he would not be meeting the oil executives himself. "I want an explanation for why they aren't



President Joe Biden talks to the media after walking on the beach with his granddaughter Natalie Biden, left, and his daughter Ashley Biden, right, Monday, June 20, 2022 at Rehoboth Beach, Del. Associated Press

refining more oil," Biden said. The Biden administration has already released oil from the U.S. strategic reserve and increased ethanol blending for the summer, in addition to sending a letter last week to oil refiners urging them to increase their refining capacity. Yet those efforts have yet to reduce price pressures meaningfully, such that the administration is now considering a gas tax holiday. Taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel help to pay for highways. The Penn Wharton Budget Model released estimates

Wednesday showing that consumers saved at the pump because of gas tax holidays in Connecticut, Georgia and Maryland. The majority of the savings went to consumers, instead of service stations and others in the energy sector. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm in a Sunday interview on CNN's "State of the Union" cautioned that "part of the challenge with the gas tax, of course, is that it funds the roads." But Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Monday noted "consumers are really hurting from higher

gas prices" and remained open to a gas tax holiday. "It's been a substantial burden on American households and I think, while not perfect, it is something that should be under some consideration as a policy to address it," Yellen said in Toronto at a joint press conference Monday with Canadian Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland. Oil refiners say their ability to produce additional gas and diesel fuel is limited, meaning that prices could remain high unless demand starts to wane.

The American Petroleum Institute and American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers sent a joint letter to Biden on Wednesday that said refineries are operating near their maximum capacity already and nearly half of the capacity taken off line was due to the facilities converting to renewable fuel production.

"Today's situation did not materialize overnight and will not be quickly solved," the letter said. "To protect and foster U.S. energy security and refining capacity, we urge to you to take steps to encourage more domestic energy production," including new infrastructure and reducing regulatory burdens.

Strolling on the beach with his daughter Ashley, granddaughter Naomi, and his granddaughter's fiancé, Biden stopped frequently to chat with beachgoers who were spending the Juneteenth federal holiday at the beach.

He took a moment to offer assurances about inflation — the consumer-price index increased to a nearly 40-year high of 8.6% in May from the same month a year ago — and growing warnings from economists that a recession may be around the corner.

"We're going to get through this, guys," Biden told one group of beachgoers. □

Navy destroyer bears name of decorated Marine killed in WWII

BATH, Maine (AP) — The christening of a Navy destroyer on Saturday highlighted the sacrifices of two generations — the ship's namesake killed in World War II and another Marine who died more than 60 years later.

The future USS Basilone bears the name of a Marine who was awarded the Medal of Honor before his death on Iwo Jima. Breaking a bottle on the ship's bow for good luck was a woman who lost her brother in an ambush in Fallujah, Iraq.

The legacy and sacrifice

of such Marines are never forgotten, Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps Troy Black told a crowd of 2,000 gathered next to the warship at Navy shipbuilder Bath Iron Works in Maine.

Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor for heroism while defending Henderson Field against a fierce assault by a 3,000-strong Japanese force during the Battle of Guadalcanal in 1942.

The New Jersey resident returned home to a hero's welcome and a parade. But he asked to rejoin his comrades and died on the

opening day of the invasion of Iwo Jima in February 1945. He was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously for heroism that day.

His 92-year-old brother Donald and others at the ceremony spoke of Basilone's patriotism, dedication and bravery.

That included his insistence on returning to combat instead of staying safe for the remainder of the war. "He really wanted to go back," Donald Basilone said in statement read by his niece.

Ryan Manion, whose brother, Marine 1st Lt. Travis Man-



The superstructure of the future USS Basilone and a crane are seen on Saturday, June 18, at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine. Associated Press

ion, was killed in Iraq, said both her brother and the ship's namesake were cut

from the same cloth even though they were from different generations. □

California eyes banning loitering for prostitution arrests

By **DON THOMPSON**

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— California lawmakers are finally sending to Gov. Gavin Newsom a hot potato of a bill that would bar police from making arrests on a charge of loitering for prostitution, nine months after the measure passed the Legislature, the author of the bill announced Monday.

Democratic Sen. Scott Wiener and other supporters said arrests for loitering with the intent to engage in prostitution often rely on police officers' perceptions and disproportionately target transgender, Black and Latino women.

Critics see it as a further erosion of criminal penalties that tie the hands of police on quality-of-life issues like shoplifting and car burglaries. Greg Burt, a spokesman for the California Family Council, and other opponents fear it's part of an eventual effort to decriminalize prostitution.

"This bill seems to be perfect if you want sex trafficking to even increase in California," he said. "This bill is really going to affect poor neighborhoods — it's not going to affect neighborhoods where these legislators live."

The bill would not decriminalize soliciting or engaging in sex work. It would allow those who were pre-



California state Sen. Scott Wiener, D-San Francisco, speaks on a measure at the Capitol in Sacramento, Calif., on March 31, 2022.

Associated Press

viously convicted or are currently serving loitering sentences to ask a court to dismiss and seal the record of the conviction.

The measure has passed both legislative chambers, but Wiener took the unusual step of stopping the bill from going to Newsom after the Assembly approved the measure in September with no votes to spare. More than two dozen of his fellow Democrats in the Assembly and Senate either voted no or declined to vote.

He wanted time, Wiener said then, "to make the case about why this civil rights bill is good policy ... and why this discriminatory loitering crime goes against California values."

But in the nine months since lawmakers acted, concerns about crime, homelessness and the perception that major California cities are becoming more unsafe have become more acute, providing fodder for political campaigns heading into the November election.

Among the bill's supporters is San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin, who voters just recalled from office in mid-term after critics mounted a campaign labeling him as soft on criminals.

Newsom, a Democrat running for reelection after easily beating back a recall last year, has said more needs to be done to address homelessness and shoplifting. Newsom's spokespeople did not immediately comment on Wiener's bill.

Burt believes lawmakers waited to send it to Newsom until after the governor defeated the recall and safely made it through the June 7 primary election.

The bill is sponsored in part by groups supporting gay and transgender rights, and Wiener said he waited to send the measure to Newsom until Pride Month, which celebrates the LGBTQ community.

"It is more important than ever to get rid of a law that targets our community," said Wiener, who is gay. "Pride isn't just about rainbow flags and parades. It's about protecting the most marginalized in our community."

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the nation's largest such agency, and the 75,000-member Peace Officers Research Association of California are among the opponents. Both say repealing it will hinder the prosecution of those who commit crimes related to prostitution and human trafficking and make it harder to identify and assist those being victimized.

In a statement to lawmakers, the sheriff's department said the law is "often used to keep prostitutes from hanging around public places, business and residential communities, which can breed crime and drug use." □



People visit a memorial at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, on June 2, 2022, to pay their respects to the victims killed in a school shooting.

Associated Press

UVALDE, Texas (AP)

— A legislative committee investigating the deadly

shooting at a Texas elementary school last month is set to hear more testimony

Law officers testifying for committee on Uvalde shooting

ny from law enforcement officers on Monday.

State Rep. Dustin Burrows, who is chairing the committee investigating the shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, said they would hear more witness testimony from the Uvalde Police Department, in addition to speaking with another officer from the school district police and a member of the Department of Public Safety.

"We want to at least compliment all the law en-

forcement agencies for being cooperative and providing the witnesses we have asked for," said Burrows, a Republican from Lubbock.

After Burrows' opening statements during the committee hearing in Uvalde, the committee went into executive session, blocking the public from hearing witness testimony.

Last Thursday, Burrows signaled impatience with the Uvalde Police Department, saying it was unclear

whether they would testify voluntarily before the panel. But he said Friday that Uvalde police officials had agreed to speak with the committee.

An 18-year-old gunman killed 19 students and two teachers at the school on May 24. Questions about why police did not confront and kill the gunman for more than an hour, even as anguished parents outside the school urged officers to go in and panicked children called 911 from inside. □

Israel to dissolve parliament, call 5th election in 3 years

By ILAN BEN ZION

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's weakened coalition government decided Monday to dissolve parliament and call a new election, the country's fifth in three years. The vote, expected this fall, could bring about the return of a nationalist religious government led by former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or another prolonged period of political gridlock. The previous four elections, focused on Netanyahu's fitness to rule while on trial for corruption charges, ended in deadlock.

In a nationally televised news conference, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said it wasn't easy to disband the government, but he called it "the right decision for Israel."

The fragile coalition government, which includes parties from across the political spectrum, lost its majority earlier this year and has faced rebellions from different lawmakers in recent weeks.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will take over from Bennett on an interim basis in an agreement they an-



Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, left, speaks during a joint statement with Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, at the Knesset, Israel's parliament, in Jerusalem, Monday, June 20, 2022.

Associated Press

nounced together.

"Even if we're going to elections in a few months, our challenges as a state cannot wait," Lapid said. Bennett formed the eight-party coalition in June 2021 after four successive inconclusive elections.

It included a diverse array of parties, from dovish factions that support an end to Israel's occupation of lands captured in 1967, to hard-

line parties that oppose Palestinian independence. Often described as a political "experiment," it made history by becoming the first Israeli coalition government to include an Arab party.

The alliance made a series of accomplishments, including passing the first national budget in several years and navigating a pair of coronavirus outbreaks

without imposing any lockdowns.

But eventually it unraveled, in large part because several members of Bennett's hard-line party objected to what they felt were compromises made by him to keep the coalition afloat and his perceived moderation.

The immediate cause for Bennett's decision was the looming expiration of laws

that grant West Bank settlers special legal status. If those laws were to expire, settlers would be subject to many of the military laws that apply to the territory's more than 2 million Palestinians.

Parliament was to vote to extend the laws earlier this month. But the hard-line opposition, comprised heavily of settler supporters, paradoxically voted against the bill in order to embarrass the government.

Dovish members of the coalition who normally oppose the settlements voted in favor of the bill in hopes of keeping the government afloat.

By dissolving parliament, the laws remain in effect. Bennett, a former settler leader, said that if he had allowed the laws to expire, there would have been "grave security perils and constitutional chaos."

"I couldn't let that happen," he said.

The dissolution threatened to overshadow a visit scheduled by President Joe Biden scheduled for next month. The U.S. Embassy said it assumed that the visit would take place as planned. □

EU: Blame Russia, not sanctions, for global food crisis

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN

Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union's top diplomat said on Monday he has written to all African foreign ministers to explain that the bloc's sanctions on Russia are not responsible for the looming global food crisis, and pledged to work out ways for exports of food and fertilizers to reach their continent.

The EU has not banned exports of Russian food or fertilizers to non-EU nations as part of its sanctions package.

Earlier this month, the chairman of the African Union, Senegal's President Macky Sall, told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the fight-

ing in Ukraine and Western sanctions had worsened food shortages, and appealed to other countries to ensure grain and fertilizer exports from Russia and Ukraine aren't blocked.

"Russia is blockading Ukrainian exports," Josep Borrell said after a meeting of EU Foreign Affairs ministers. "Not us. Russia is destroying ports, and destroying food stocks, destroying transport infrastructure."

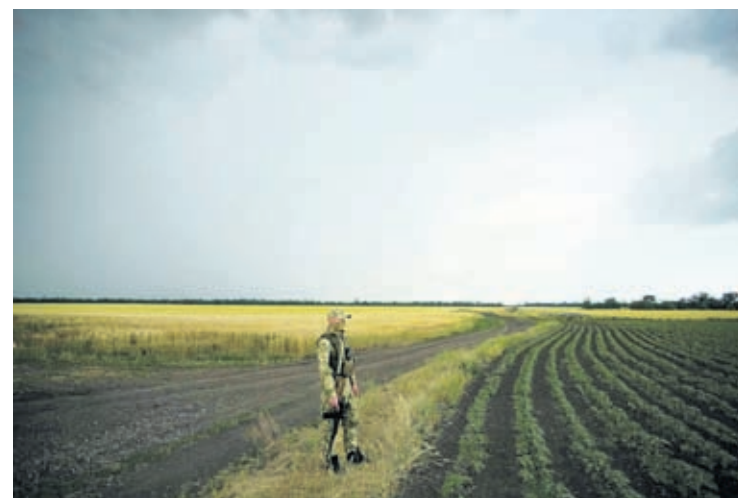
Russia's war against Ukraine has been preventing some 20 million tons of Ukrainian grain from getting to the Middle East, North Africa and parts of Asia.

Borrell said it is "a deliberate attempt (by Russia) to create hunger in the world,"

adding that the Kremlin's attempt to blame Western sanctions for the crisis was just "propaganda."

Sall also complained that the collateral effects of the EU decision to expel many Russian banks from the SWIFT financial messaging system will hurt African countries' ability to make payments for food imports. Borrell said he understands the concerns of African leaders about the consequences of EU sanctions.

"If there is a problem, we will solve it," he said. "But I have to know the problem. Not the whole financial system of Russia is de-Swifted." Meanwhile, Borrell said the bloc is ready to look into whether sanctions imposed



A Russian soldier guards an area next to a field of wheat as foreign journalists work in the Zaporizhzhia region in an area under Russian military control, southeastern Ukraine, Tuesday, June 14, 2022.

Associated Press

on Belarus before the war targeting exports of potash a common fertilizer ingredient can affect its distribution across the world.

In addition, Borrell said the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, will send letters to all financial

and economic actors to explain what they can do under the sanctions regime.

"Because our sanctions don't forbid them to participate on the trade on food, fertilizers with Russia and third countries," he said. □

Hong Kong's last UK governor says crackdowns 'heartbreaking'

By SYLVIA HUI

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Beijing's crackdown on civil liberties in Hong Kong has been "a lot worse" than expected, the last British governor of the city said Monday as he launched a new book to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the former British colony's handover to Chinese rule.

Chris Patten, who led Britain's last government in Hong Kong before the Asian financial hub was returned to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997, said it was "heartbreaking" to see its transformation.

"I thought there was a prospect that (China) would keep its word, and I'm sorry that it hasn't," he said in London. "I just find it intensely difficult. I do believe that Hong Kong is a great city, I hope it will be a great city again."

But he added that he wasn't too optimistic. "I'll believe that things are changing when some of those who've gone into exile in the last few years start to want to go back to China, to Hong Kong," he told The Associated Press. "And that isn't happening at the



Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong speaks ahead of the publication of his book "The Hong Kong Diaries", during a press conference hosted by the Foreign Press Association at the Royal Over-Seas League in London, Monday, June 20, 2022.

Associated Press

moment." Hong Kong, Britain's last significant colony, reverted to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" principle that was supposed to preserve for 50 years its rule of law and civil liberties including freedom of speech and assembly not found elsewhere on mainland China. But Beijing has dramatically intensified its crackdown on dissent in the city since

2019, when massive pro-democracy protests triggered violent clashes between activists and police. Since authorities introduced a wide-ranging national security law in 2020, dissenting media have been shut down and over 150 people have been arrested on suspicion of offences including subversion, secession, terrorism and foreign collusion to in-

tervene in the city's affairs. Reflecting on his time in the city and what happened after the British left, Patten said that "by and large, Hong Kong remained pretty much the same" for a decade after the handover until Xi came to power. He said "(Chinese President Xi Jinping) and his goons" were terrified by anti-government protests in Hong Kong, and that he was sur-

prised and distressed by the extent to which Beijing disregarded the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the treaty that set the conditions of Hong Kong's handover to Chinese rule.

"I'm surprised that Xi Jinping has taken steps which are I think so, so bad for China's medium and long term interests, not only in managing the economy, but also in managing China's soft power around the world ... which is dissipating very rapidly," Patten said. Patten described as "ludicrous" how authorities in Hong Kong are reportedly planning to introduce new school textbooks claiming the city was never a British colony. He joked that his new book, a collection of his diary entries during his time as governor from 1992 to 1997, showed that "I do exist and I'm not a figment of my imagination." Asked about his view on China's military ambitions over Taiwan and whether that may result in a situation comparable to Russia's war in Ukraine, Patten said he hoped Xi realizes "what an incredibly dangerous enterprise it would be" to assault Taiwan. □

East African leaders send regional force to eastern Congo

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) —

East Africa's leaders have responded to the threat of war between Rwanda and Congo by instructing a new regional force to deploy in eastern Congo and ordering an immediate cease-fire. A statement after the leaders' meeting in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, didn't give details on the date of deployment of the force or its composition. Congo had welcomed the force's presence but not neighboring Rwanda's participation. The presidents of both countries attended Monday.

The regional heads of state adopted "for immediate implementation" the status of forces agreement, concept of operations and rules of engagement, the

statement said. The heads of state told the force to cooperate with Congolese forces to stabilize the region. There was no direct mention of Rwanda, which Congo has accused of supporting the M23 rebel

group that has carried out renewed attacks in recent months. The statement noted the "presence of foreign negative elements" as a critical issue. Rwanda has long denied supporting the M23 rebels, who captured

a key town in eastern Congo last week.

Asked after Monday's meeting whether Rwanda would contribute troops to the regional force in eastern Congo, deputy government spokesman Alain Mukuririnda said he needed to check with the president's office. Congo is not the one who chooses who should deploy or not, he added.

Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi on Friday accused Rwanda of trying to occupy his country's land for its vast mineral wealth, hours after Rwanda said a Congolese soldier had crossed the border and begun shooting at Rwandan security forces and civilians before being shot dead. Congo's president has also

called on international leaders, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, to step up the pressure on Rwanda when it hosts the Commonwealth summit this week. Each side has accused the other of incursions. Congo now seeks to suspend all agreements with Rwanda. Rwanda's state minister for foreign affairs in charge of East African matters, Manasseh Nshuti, has said dialogue "is the solution" to the issues. Dynamics in eastern Congo "were already strained" by Congo and neighboring Uganda carrying out a joint operation there against another rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces, according to a new report by the U.N. panel of experts on Congo. □



Rwandan border security forces stand guard on their side of the Petite Barriere border crossing with Rwanda in Goma, eastern Congo Friday, June 17, 2022.

Associated Press

Colombia picks 1st leftist president in tight runoff contest

By REGINA GARCIA CANO
and ASTRID SUAREZ
Associated Press

BOGOTÁ, Colombia (AP) —

Colombia will be governed by a leftist president for the first time after former rebel Gustavo Petro narrowly defeated a real estate tycoon in a runoff election that underscored people's disgust with the country's traditional politicians.

Petro's third attempt to win the presidency earned him 50.48% of the votes Sunday, while political outsider Rodolfo Hernández got 47.26%, according to results released by election authorities.

The election came as Colombians struggle with rising inequality, inflation and violence factors that led voters in the election's first round last month to punish long-governing centrist and right-leaning politicians and pick two outsiders for the runoff contest.

Petro's win in Latin America's third most populous nation was more than a defeat of Hernández.

It puts an end to Colombia's long stigmatization of the left for its perceived association with the country's half century of armed conflict. The president-elect was once a rebel with the now-defunct M-19 movement and was granted amnesty after being jailed for his involvement with the group.

Petro issued a call for unity during his victory speech Sunday night and extended an olive branch to some of his harshest critics, saying all members of the opposition will be welcomed at the presidential palace "to discuss the problems of Colombia."

"From this government that is beginning there will never be political persecution or legal persecution, there will only be respect and dialogue," he said, adding that he will listen to those who have raised arms as well as to "that silent majority of peasants, Indigenous people, women, youth."

The vote is also resulting in Colombia having a Black woman as vice president for the first time. Petro's



Former rebel Gustavo Petro, left, his wife Veronica Alcocer, back center, and his running mate Francia Marquez, celebrate before supporters after winning a runoff presidential election in Bogotá, Colombia, Sunday, June 19, 2022.

Associated Press

running mate, Francia Márquez, 40, is a lawyer and environmental leader whose opposition to illegal mining resulted in threats and a grenade attack in 2019.

Hernández, whose campaign was based on an anti-corruption fight, conceded his defeat shortly after results were announced.

"I accept the result, as it should be, if we want our institutions to be firm," he said in a video on social media.

"I sincerely hope that this decision is beneficial for everyone."

Petro's showing was the latest leftist political victory in Latin America fueled by voters' desire for change. Chile, Peru and Honduras elected leftist presidents in 2021, and in Brazil former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is leading the polls for this year's presidential election.

But the results were an immediate reason to fret for some voters whose closest reference to a leftist government is the troubled neighboring Venezuela.

"We hope that Mr. Gustavo

Petro complies with what was said in his government plan, that he leads this country to greatness, which we need so much, and that (he) ends corruption," said Karin Ardila García, a Hernández supporter in the north-central city of Bucaramanga. "That he does not lead to communism, to socialism, to a war where they continue to kill us in Colombia. ... (H)e does not lead us to another Venezuela, Cuba, Argentina, Chile."

About 21.6 million of the 39 million eligible voters cast a ballot Sunday. Abstentionism has been above 40% in every presidential election since 1990.

Petro, 62, will be officially declared winner after a formal count that will take a few days. Historically, the preliminary results have coincided with the final ones. Several heads of state congratulated Petro on Sunday. So did a fierce critic, former President Álvaro Uribe, who remains a central figure in Colombia's politics.

Polls ahead of the runoff had indicated Petro and

Hernández both former mayors were in a tight race since they topped four other candidates in the initial May 29 election. Neither got enough votes to win outright and headed into the runoff.

Petro won 40% of the votes in the initial round and Hernández 28%, but the difference quickly narrowed as Hernández began to attract so-called anti-Petrista voters.

Petro has proposed ambitious pension, tax, health and agricultural reforms and changes to how Colombia fights drug cartels and other armed groups. But he will have a tough time delivering on his promises as he does not have a majority in Congress, which is key to carrying out reforms.

"The people who do support him have very high hopes, and they are proba-

bly going to be disappointed pretty quickly when he can't move things right away," said Adam Isacson, an expert on Colombia at the Washington Office on Latin America think tank.

"I think you might find a situation where he either has to strike some deals and give up a lot of his programs just to get some things passed or the whole country could be gridlocked," Isacson added.

Petro is willing to resume diplomatic relations with Venezuela, which were halted in 2019. He also wants to make changes to Colombia's relations with the U.S. by seeking a renegotiation of a free trade agreement and new ways to fight drug trafficking.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement that the Biden administration looks forward to working with Petro.

Polls say most Colombians believe the country is heading in the wrong direction and disapprove of President Iván Duque, who was not eligible to seek re-election.

The pandemic set back the country's anti-poverty efforts by at least a decade. Official figures show that 39% of Colombia's lived on less than \$89 a month last year.

The rejection of politics as usual "is a reflection of the fact that the people are fed up with the same people as always," said Nataly Amezcua, a 26-year-old civil engineer waiting to vote.

"We have to create greater social change. Many people in the country aren't in the best condition." But even the two outsider candidates left her cold. She said she would cast a blank ballot:

"I don't like either of the two candidates. ... Neither of them seems like a good person to me." □



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Travellers' Choice 2020

ORANJESTAD – In the second week of June 2022, 13.000 cruise passengers visited Aruba. These visitors cruised to Aruba on Carnival Horizon, Allure of the Seas, and Explorer of the Seas. Cruise tourism plays a vital role in the recovery and progress of the economy of Aruba.

That is why the authorities have been focusing on expanding the tourism markets.

The Minister of Tourism Dangui Oduber is pleased with this week filled with cruise tourists enjoying our island.

A week in which taxi drivers were busy,

tour operators, restaurants and shops increased their sales. Aruba is recovering and progressing, and the government is confident that in 2022, tourism will recover to the same levels as in 2019.

Despite being in the "low season" for cruise tourism, we can look back at a successful week with a substantial amount of cruise tourists. In November 2022, a new cruise ship will start visiting Aruba.

More information will follow.

Tourism remains our principal driver of the economy. □



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Honoring of Marriott Surf Club



EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Mr. Mario Arends had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emerald Ambassador".

The honorees are Mr. Don Sien and Mrs. Amy Wu resident of New York, who have been honored as Distinguished Visitors.

The symbolic honorary title is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a to-

ken of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba between the 10-20-35 or more years consecutive mark.

The honorees love coming to the island for its lovely weather and out of hurricane belt position, excellent and delicious local cuisine, friendly and warm people, as well as the ability to re-learn and practice Papiamentu.

Mr. Arends together with the representatives of Marriott Surf Club presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □



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Attractions and Sightseeing locations in Aruba

ORANJESTAD — There are enough sightseeing locations on the island to fill up a month-long vacation. Aruba's beaches are a big attraction, and although it's great to spend long days just relaxing on the beach and listening to the ocean, there are also plenty of opportunities to get to know Aruba's most attractive sights, historical and natural attractions, and museums. Check out these attractions you don't want to miss!



Blue Horses in Downtown, Oranjestad

This series of 8 sculptures were created by native Aruban artist Osaira Muyale. She named the project Paarden Baai, which translates to "Horse Bay". The statues were installed in 2015 and pay homage to the rich history of Aruba's horse trading industry. In the 17th Century Aruba was used by many countries (Europe, South America, Caribbean islands, and the Mediterranean) as a trading post. The most popular being cattle and horse trading. Horses were once the most important sources of livelihood for Aruba.

For 4 centuries the horse and cattle trade ran strong. At any given time Aruba was home to herds of thousands of horses that roamed the island. Aruba being the perfect trading post encouraged an extremely diverse culture and is the reason almost all Arubans speak more than 1 or 2 languages.

Each of the 8 bright royal blue horses is unique and carries its own name and personality. Pictured above is the mare Sinforosa, but you can also find Saturnina, Escapia, Rosalina, Eufrosina, Ambrosio, Bonifacia, and Celestina. The sculptures embody strength, nobility, grace, beauty and freedom. They represent the historical moment where the horses jumped from the ship decks into the Caribbean and swam to the Aruban Bay.

When you visit Aruba be sure to explore downtown Oranjestad and try to find all 8!



The Lourdes Grotto

Named in commemoration of the famous French religious landmark, was created under the guidance of a priest named "Erkamp" and parishioners in the year 1958. The grotto, a shrine built into the rocks is located in Seroe Preto, just off the main road to San Nicolas.

A statue of the Virgin Mary, weighing 700 kilos, was hoisted into place in the grotto. Every year, on February 11 (feast of Lady of Lourdes), a procession leaves from the St. Theresita church in San Nicolas to the grotto, where a mass is performed. The grotto is located road-side and can be visited daily. Just make sure you park safely in the event you wish to stop for pictures at this location.

Bubali Bird Sanctuary

Watch more than 80 species of migratory birds from the Bubali watch tower, overlooking their resting and breeding area. The observation tower allows birdwatchers to get a true birds' eye view. Migratory birds, looking for lush vegetation in which to nest, find an oasis within the Bubali Bird Sanctuary. The nearby water treatment facility empties into two inter-connected man-made bird ponds. Birds that inhabit the sanctuary include herons, egrets, gulls, skimmers, coots, ducks and more. Located within walking distance of the Palm Beach resorts, the Bubali Bird Sanctuary offers some unique bird watching opportunities. You can't miss it as it is located just in front of the historical Old Dutch Windmill. Make sure to bring your camera as many of these birds will randomly fly by the observation tower giving a little show. This is a great place to bring kids for a unique and possibly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be so close to the untamed.

The happiest island in the Caribbean is so much more than just sun, sand and sea. ☐



Liz Weston: Is medical debt vanishing from credit reports?

By **LIZ WESTON**
of NerdWallet

Health care bills are about to become far less threatening to the financial well-being of millions of Americans.

The three major credit bureaus are erasing most medical debts from people's credit reports, and the Biden administration is reducing or eliminating medical debt as a factor in government lending decisions.

Here's what you need to know about medical debt now.

1 IN 5 U.S. HOUSEHOLDS HAS MEDICAL DEBT

Roughly 1 in 5 U.S. households have medical debt, according to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Some aren't insured, while others struggle to pay deductibles and other cost-sharing. Insurance billing is byzantine, to say the least, and it's easy to lose track of a bill while your insurer decides how much, or whether, to pay.

Many of these unpaid bills wind up on people's credit reports. The CFPB found medical debts on 43 million credit reports last year, and medical debts made up 58% of all bills in collections as of the second quarter of 2021. Collections can depress your credit scores, which can make it harder to get loans or require you to pay higher interest rates. Bad credit also can cause you to be turned away from jobs or apartments, and require you to pay more for car and home insurance.

Newer versions of credit scoring formulas treat medical debt

less harshly, since research shows health care bills aren't as reliable as a gauge of creditworthiness compared to other types of collections. But most lenders still use older credit scores that don't distinguish medical debt from other overdue bills.

Rather than wait for lenders to update to the latest credit scores — a process that could take years, if it ever happens — the CFPB announced on March 1 that it would investigate whether medical debt should be included on credit reports at all.

Seventeen days later, the three credit bureaus — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion — responded by promising to remove nearly 70% of medical debts from consumer credit reports within the next year.

MOST MEDICAL DEBTS DISAPPEARING FROM CREDIT REPORTS

Starting July 1, all paid medical collections will be eliminated from people's credit files, and no unpaid bill will be reported until 12 months have passed — an increase from the current term of six months. By June 30, 2023, the three bureaus will also stop reporting unpaid medical debts under \$500.

Consumer advocates hailed the changes but noted that those with larger debts would still face credit damage. About 16 million people (6% of U.S. adults) owe more than \$1,000 in medical debt, and 3 million (1%) owe more than \$10,000, according to KFF, the nonprofit health research organization formerly known as the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Recent moves by the Biden administration could help improve access to credit. On April 11, Vice President Kamala Harris announced additional reforms, including reducing or eliminating medical debt as a factor in government lending decisions. That should make many home and business loans easier to get. Also, Veterans Affairs, which has already erased \$1 billion in copayments owed by veterans, promised to streamline the process so more low-income vets can have their VA bills forgiven. The VA has also stopped reporting most veterans' medical debts to the credit bureaus.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO DEAL WITH MEDICAL DEBT

Soon you won't have to worry about a minor medical bill tanking your credit scores. But catastrophic medical bills could still upend your finances. Consider taking the following steps to reduce your vulnerability to medical debt:

— **STAY COVERED, IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN.** Insured people enjoy more consumer protections, and better access to health care, than the uninsured. People who aren't covered by workplace insurance or government plans such as Medicare can find coverage through Affordable Care Act exchanges. Start your search at [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov). Most uninsured people qualify for subsidies to make premiums more affordable.

— **CHECK ALL MEDICAL BILLS FOR ERRORS.** Billing errors are common, so request itemized bills for hospital stays and complex procedures.



This undated file photo provided by NerdWallet shows Liz Weston, a columnist for personal finance website NerdWallet.com.

Associated Press

Dispute any mistakes you find.

— **ASK FOR HELP.** Hospitals and other health care providers may have financial assistance programs that could reduce or eliminate your bills. (Nonprofit hospitals are required to have such programs but may not offer help unless you ask.)

— **AVOID USING CREDIT CARDS IF YOU CAN'T PAY IN FULL.** Credit cards tend to have high interest rates that make debt harder to pay. Many health care providers offer interest-free payment plans that allow you to pay off your bill over time. □

Circle CEO Jeremy Allaire on cryptocurrency market turmoil

By **KEN SWEET**
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Circle is the cryptocurrency company behind USD Coin, the second-largest so-called "stablecoin" in the crypto industry.

Unlike more popular cryptocurrencies like bitcoin, stablecoins are typically backed by gold, government bonds, cash or other assets, and are typically priced on a 1:1 ratio with the U.S. dollar. More than \$50 billion is stored in USDC, second only to Tether, a rival stablecoin with \$70 billion in assets.

Co-founder and CEO Jeremy Allaire spoke to The Associated Press about



This photo provided by Circle shows Jeremy Allaire.

Associated Press

Circle's launch of Euro Coin, its euro equivalent of USD Coin. He also spoke about broader turmoil in the cryptocurrency space. Q: Why are you launching a new cryptocurrency, Euro Coin, during this trou-

bled time for the industry?

A: In some ways, it's a great time to be launching products that increase the utility value of blockchain technologies. The market turmoil has been a really positive catalyst for USDC. It has been the flight to safety for crypto. (...) With the launch of Euro Coin, we're bringing the same technology, regulatory framework, trust, transparency, and reporting that we put into USDC.

Q: How will you back Euro Coin? Are you going to hold Eurobonds like you hold Treasuries for USDC?

A: It's going to be just euro currency, held in euro-denominated banking

accounts. That's it. We're starting in a really simple way.

Q: Terra, a so-called "algorithmic stablecoin," collapsed in May, erasing \$40 billion in wealth in hours. This month the company Celsius froze all deposits and appears to be the crypto equivalent of a bank failure. What's going on here?

A: It reinforces our view, whether it will be with stablecoins or cryptocurrencies, that it should be done inside the regulated U.S. banking system. And that's why we've run USDC as we have for four years. And that's holding up.

Q: What do you make of

Congress' efforts to regulate crypto?

A: You're seeing two approaches on this issue. You can take the targeted approach like regulating stablecoins, or you can take the omnibus approach and regulate the entire industry. But my view has been that the Biden administration and Congress — Democrats and Republicans — will agree on the need for clear national policy on stablecoins. It's the lowest hanging fruit.

Q: Turmoil in the crypto industry has caused layoffs at many firms. Coinbase laid off 18% of its staff this week. How are you being impacted? □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 41 Binge
1 Important times

5 Old market

10 Sun-powered

12 "Paradise Lost" figure

13 Repertory theater

15 In the past

16 Parrot or puppy

17 Motor need

18 Toadies

20 Different act

22 "West Side Story" gang

23 Declare

25 Stare in disbelief

28 From the area

31 Blunders

32 Veal serving

34 Overly

35 Fall behind

36 Congress creation

37 Park structure

40 Colorado resort

DOWN

1 School paper

2 Blush relatives

3 Nearly

4 Friend of Frodo

5 Helper: Abbr.

6 Gangster's gun

7 Peter of "Lawrence of Arabia"

8 Intolerant sort



Yesterday's answer

9 Low joints

11 Mend one's ways

14 Tourist transport

19 Art inspirers

20 Toss out

24 Ruffians

25 Alludes to

26 Incite

27 On time

29 Charm

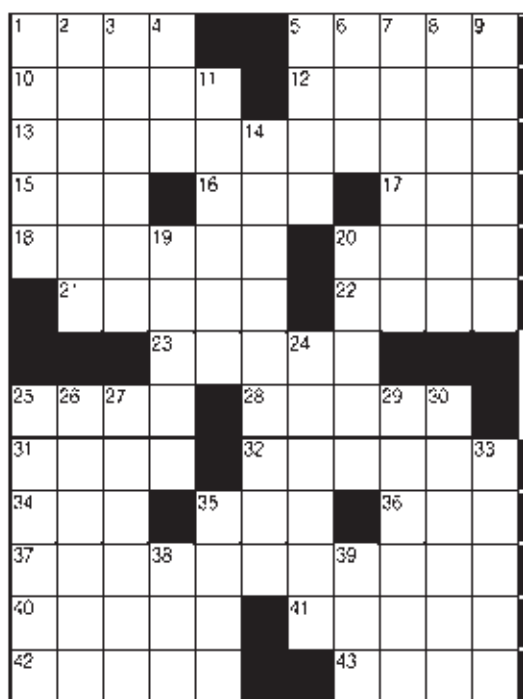
30 Rent

33 Online message

35 Singer

38 Sea, to

39 Make a choice



6-21

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-21 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

B C T P Y C T Y E T X B N B T Q

Z S R G B Z Y B S R Y C T Y N B E J I T F

H J L B R R B R I S G J Q T I T B R I B Y C

Y C J F V X X J Q E F Z S Y Y

E B Y K L J Q T N P

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: NO ONE LEAVES HOME UNLESS HOME IS THE MOUTH OF A SHARK — WARREN SHIRP

Trans kids' treatment can start younger, new guidelines say



Dr. David Klein, right, an Air Force Major and chief of adolescent medicine at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital, listens as Amanda Brewer, left, speaks with her daughter, Jenn Brewer, 13, as the teenager has blood drawn during a monthly appointment for monitoring her treatment at the hospital in Fort Belvoir, Va., on Sept. 7, 2016. Brewer is transitioning from male to female.

Associated Press

By LINDSEY TANNER
AP Medical Writer

A leading transgender health association has lowered its recommended minimum age for starting gender transition treatment, including sex hormones and surgeries.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health said hormones could be started at age 14, two years earlier than the group's previous advice, and some surgeries done at age 15 or 17, a year or so earlier than previous guidance. The group acknowledged potential risks but said it is unethical and harmful to withhold early treatment.

The association provided The Associated Press with an advance copy of its update ahead of publication in a medical journal, expected later this year. The international group promotes evidence-based standards of care and includes more than 3,000 doctors, social scientists and others involved in transgender health issues.

The update is based on expert opinion and a review of scientific evidence on the benefits and harms of transgender medical treatment in teens whose gender identity doesn't match the sex they were assigned at birth, the group said. Such evidence is limited but has grown in the last decade, the group said, with studies suggesting the treatments can improve psychological well-being and reduce suicidal behavior.

Starting treatment earlier allows transgender teens to experience physical puberty changes around the same time as other teens, said Dr. Eli Coleman, chair of the group's standards of care and director of the University of Minnesota Medical School's human sexuality program. But he stressed that age is just one factor to be weighed. Emotional maturity, parents' consent, longstanding gender discomfort and a careful psychological evaluation are among the others.

"Certainly there are adolescents that do not have the emotional or cognitive maturity to make an informed decision," he said.

"That is why we recommend a careful multidisciplinary assessment."

The updated guidelines include recommendations for treatment in adults, but the teen guidance is bound to get more attention. It comes amid a surge in kids referred to clinics offering transgender medical treatment, along with new efforts to prevent or restrict the treatment.

Many experts say more kids are seeking such treatment because gender-questioning children are more aware of their medical options and facing less stigma.

Critics, including some from within the transgender treatment community, say some clinics are too quick to offer irreversible treatment to kids who would otherwise outgrow their gender-questioning.

Psychologist Erica Anderson resigned her post as a board member of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health last year after voicing concerns about "sloppy" treatment given to kids without adequate counseling.

She is still a group member and supports the updated guidelines, which emphasize comprehensive assessments before treatment. But she says dozens of families have told her that doesn't always happen.

"They tell me horror stories. They tell me, 'Our child had 20 minutes with the doctor' before being offered hormones, she said. 'The parents leave with their hair on fire.'"

Estimates on the number of transgender youth and adults worldwide vary, partly because of different definitions.

The association's new guidelines say data from mostly Western countries suggest a range of between a fraction of a percent in adults to up to 8% in kids. □

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24/7



A baby chimp clings to its mother as she walks at Chimp Haven in Keithville, La., Tuesday, Feb. 19, 2013.

Associated Press

Group blasts Chimp Haven fight deaths; wild chimps also kill

By J. McCONNAUGHEY

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — An animal rights group has filed a federal complaint against the national sanctuary for federally owned chimpanzees once used for experiments.

A federal citation and Chimp Haven's own reports about an escape and about deaths caused by fights among chimpanzees show the sanctuary's care is poor, according to Stop Animal Exploitation Now.

The sanctuary in north Louisiana said it acted immediately after a female was attacked in April by others to which it was being introduced. That animal was euthanized in May. Another female escaped twice on June 2.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture warning letter said animal-handling rules were violated in both incidents. It also noted that Chimp Haven was going over its protocols for introducing and separating animals, and that trees near the second female's main enclosure have been cut to prevent future escapes. Chimp Haven has cared for more than 500 chimps since it opened in 2005. Of these, 190 have died, including five due to aggression by other chimpanzees, it said in an emailed statement. □

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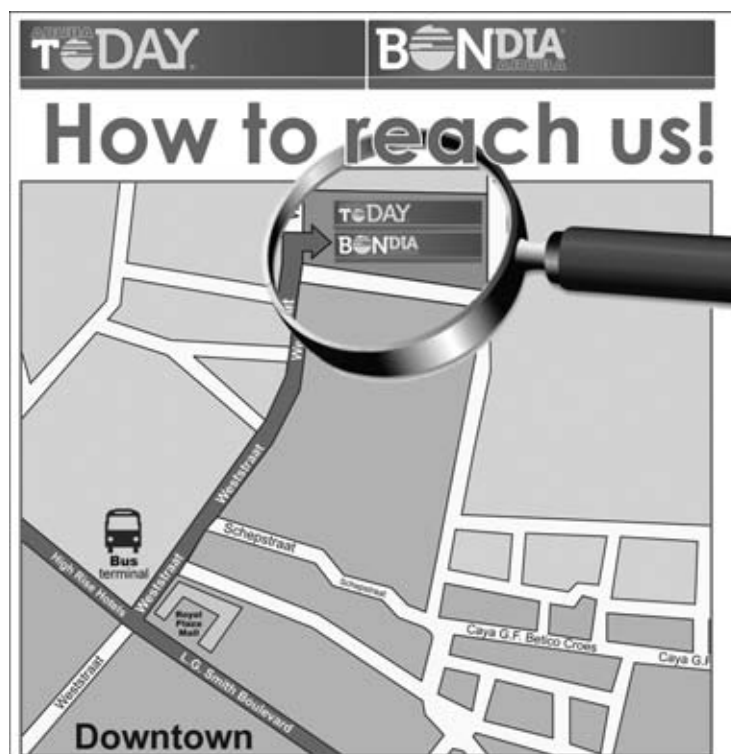
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Hank Jr. unleashes Thunderhead Hawkins on bawdy blues record

By KRISTIN M. HALL

AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) —

Sometimes it's hard to tell who Hank Williams Jr. really is behind the dark sunglasses and the beard covering facial scars.

How much of him is a persona — or a stage presence — is further complicated by the fact that Williams takes on multiple identities, whether it's Bocephus or Thunderhead Hawkins, who is the centerpiece on his latest album. Sometimes he talks about himself in the third person as if he's reviewing a movie of his life.

"I'm a Gemini," said Williams, referencing the astrological sign that is represented by twins as a way of explaining who he is.

Williams has often defied easy characterizations. He is the son of an icon, the elder Hank Williams, whose tragic death left him at a young age with a legacy to both uphold and expand upon. After surviving a near fatal fall off a mountain in 1975, Williams took his own rowdy blue-collar Southern rock sound to new heights, changing the sound of country music.

His new record, "Rich White Honky Blues," his first album since 2016, gives more insight into the Country Music Hall of Famer's early years and the influences that would eventually make him a singular artist.

Blues has always been a



Hank Williams Jr. poses in a recording studio on June 6, 2022, in Nashville, Tenn., to promote his new album "Rich White Honky Blues," under his alter ego Thunderhead Hawkins.

Associated Press

part of his musical DNA. His father learned to play guitar in Alabama from a Black bluesman named Rufus "Tee Tot" Payne, but his parents were running a boarding house and had few resources.

"They don't have money to give him, but they did have food for the guitar lessons," said Williams of Payne.

After his father's death at age 29, Williams Jr. was expected at an early age to follow in his footsteps. By the time he was 8, he was performing his late father's songs on stage, but on the car rides home, he was listening to blues by the likes of Bobby Blue Bland and late-night broadcasts of WLAC, a Nashville-based radio station that played rhythm and blues. "I'm not listening to the Grand Ole Opry," said Williams. "Never been a member of the

Grand Ole Opry. Never will be. Period. And I've done pretty good."

Williams moved away from the traditional country that his father was known for and started merging genres — Delta blues, hard rock, country, soul — alongside bands like the Marshall Tucker Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

His No. 1 hits include "A Country Boy Can Survive," "Family Tradition" and "All My Rowdy Friends Are Comin' Over Tonight," which later became the opening theme song for "Monday Night Football." He's been named entertainer of the year multiple times by the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music and won a Grammy for best country vocal collaboration.

But he also has become headline fodder for his

boisterousness and brashness, especially in his later years. He's not quiet about his conservative political beliefs, likes singing about God, guns and the South. His comments once cost him the "Monday Night Football" intro spot.

His new record continues to mythologize the macho boogie-woogie man, even as he has reached his 70s. The album is a sexualized romp through X-rated blues material by Robert Johnson, Lightnin' Hopkins, R.L. Burnside and Muddy Waters, as well as Williams' own original tunes. Recorded at Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye Studio in Nashville, the session musicians include electric slide guitarist Kenny Brown, bassist Eric Deaton, drummer Kinney Kimbrough and Auerbach on guitar.

"We understood each other pretty quick," said Williams. "I got over there with Kenny and them and Dan, and it was just like pouring water out of a cup. It went pretty smooth and we knocked it out in two and a half days." Ken Levitan, Williams' longtime manager, said Auerbach, a Grammy-winning producer and one half of the rock duo The Black Keys, was just the right fit for Williams, drawn together because of their knowledge of the blues.

"There are matches that just work very, very well," Levitan said. "And this

one has worked extremely well."

Williams added his own off-the-cuff lyrical riffs to the songs, including sometimes crude remarks about women as the band snickers in the background.

"We say a few dirty words. Several dirty words," Williams said with a smile. "This is Thunderhead Hawkins, south Alabama, Mississippi juke joint. And that's exactly how it sounds and how it feels."

But for all the bravado that Williams displays, he can't escape his own heartbreak as his family continues to endure tragedy.

Williams' eldest daughter Kate died in a car accident at age 27 in 2020, just months before it was announced he would be inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Then his wife, Mary Jane Thomas, whom he married in 1990, died in March after a medical emergency at a Florida spa.

The last track on the album "Jesus Won't You Come By Here," the only religious song on the record and penned by Lightnin' Hopkins, was a song Williams loved for decades. After all the debauchery blues, he sings, "Jesus, won't you come by here/Down on my knees to pray," like a sinner on Sunday.

He can't bring himself to sing the song live now following his wife's death. □

Malaysia: Disney refused to cut gay scenes in 'Lightyear'

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) —

Malaysia's film censors said Friday that it was Disney's decision to ax the animated film "Lightyear" from the country's cinemas after refusing to cut scenes promoting homosexuality. The Film Censorship Board said it approved the movie with parental guidance for those under 13 on the condition of modifications. Scenes and dialogues that it "found to contain elements promoting the LGBT lifestyle which violate key

aspects of the Guidelines on the Film Censorship" were ordered to "be cut and muted," the board said in a statement.

"However, the film distributors did not agree to comply with the instructions" and decided instead to cancel the screening, the board said, adding that it would not compromise on any LGBTQ scenes. The statement did not specify which scenes violated censorship guidelines.

"Lightyear" includes a fe-

male character voiced by actress Uzo Aduba briefly kissing her female partner in one scene in the \$200 million film.

Authorities across much of the Muslim world have barred "Lightyear" from being played at cinemas because it includes a brief kiss between a lesbian couple. Many Muslims consider gays and lesbians to be sinful and many Muslim-majority nations criminalize same-sex relationships. The United Arab Emirates also



Character Buzz Lightyear stands near the entrance to the Aliens Swirling Saucers ride at Toy Story Land in Disney's Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Fla., June 23, 2018.

Associated Press

announced it would ban the Pixar animated feature

from showing in movie theaters because of the kiss. □

Ceccon sets world record, Ledecky claims yet another title

By CIARÁN FAHEY

AP Sports Writer

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) —

Italy's Thomas Ceccon set a world record in the men's 100 backstroke and Katie Ledecky claimed yet another gold at the swimming world championships on Monday.

Ceccon stunned the competition in Budapest by clocking 51.60 seconds to shave 0.15 seconds off the previous best mark set by American Ryan Murphy at the 2016 Olympics.

"Yesterday I swam 52.1, very easy," Ceccon said. "I am feeling good in water and just doing my race, staying calm and focusing on my race. And that's it."

Murphy finished second, 0.37 seconds behind, followed by compatriot Hunter Armstrong, 0.38 behind Ceccon.

"Hats off to Thomas," Murphy said of seeing his record beaten. "That's a really, really fast time and it's going to be an exciting couple of years."

While the young mustached Italian claimed his first world title, Ledecky extended her record title haul to 17 with her fourth in the 1,500 freestyle.

Ledecky never looked threatened and clocked 15:30.15 — just under 10 sec-



Katie Ledecky of the United States celebrates after winning the Women 1500m Freestyle final at the 19th FINA World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, Monday, June 20, 2022.

Associated Press

onds more than her world record from 2018 — to finish 14.74 seconds ahead of fellow American Katie Grimes. Ledecky punched the water in delight then embraced her teammate.

"To share this moment with her is really special," Ledecky said.

The 16-year-old Grimes is the second youngest medalist in the 1,500 at a worlds since Ledecky won it for the first time in 2013.

"I was really nervous leading up to it because it's

my first world championships and Team USA has been doing a great job, so I wanted to keep that going," Grimes said.

Ledecky also won in 2015 and 2017 and has at least four world titles in the each of the 1,500, 800 and 400 freestyle events. Only compatriot Michael Phelps also won at least four gold medals in three different swimming events at the worlds.

"I don't think that anyone will be topping Katie for a little while, but I definitely

think it's a goal for everyone moving forward," said Australia's Lani Pallister, who finished third, 18.81 off Ledecky's pace. "She's definitely set the standard of distance swimming in the world."

Pallister's bronze was her country's first medal in this race. The 1,500 freestyle was the only women's event at a worlds in which an Australian swimmer had not reached the podium. Italy's Simona Quadarella, who was second fastest

in qualifying, finished fifth, more than half a minute behind.

Regan Smith got another gold for the United States in the women's 100 backstroke, clocking 58.22 to finish 0.18 ahead of Canadian rival Kylie Masse with another American, Claire Curzan, finishing third.

Then Italy's show began with Ceccon.

He is the second Italian man to set a world record in long course swimming after Giorgio Lambert. Lambert held the record in the men's 200 freestyle from 1989-99.

Italy's Benedetta Pilato followed up by winning the women's 100 breaststroke in 1:05.93, 0.05 ahead of Germany's Anna Elendt and 0.09 ahead of Lithuania's Rūta Meilutytė.

The 17-year-old Pilato, who couldn't contain her delight, is the youngest Italian swimmer to win gold at a worlds.

She brought her country's tally of golds to three, already as many as Italy's swimmers ever managed at a previous worlds.

Also, Romania's David Popovici set a world junior record to win the men's 200 meters in 1:43.21 — 1.26 seconds ahead of the competition. □

Sergio Romo cut by Mariners as Ken Giles joins bullpen

SEATTLE (AP) — Relievers Sergio Romo and Roenis Elías were cut Monday by the struggling Seattle Mariners to make room for reliever Ken Giles and infielder Kevin Padlo.

Romo and Elías were designated for assignment, Giles was activated from the 60-day injured list and Padlo was recalled from Triple-A Tacoma.

Seattle has lost seven of its last nine games and is fourth in the AL West at 29-39, 13 games behind first-place Houston.

Romo, a 39-year-old right-hander known for his long beard, had an 8.16 ERA in 17 relief appearances and spent a month on the in-

jured list with right shoulder inflammation. He allowed home runs to the Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout on Thursday and to the Angels' Jared Walsh on Saturday.

An All-Star in 2013 and a three-time World Series champion with San Francisco, Romo has 137 saves in 15 major league seasons, going 42-35 with a 3.20 ERA in 810 relief appearances and five starts. He has pitched for San Francisco (2008-16), the Los Angeles Dodgers (2017), Tampa Bay (2017-18), Miami (2018), Minnesota (2019-20) and Oakland (2021).

Giles, a 31-year-old right-hander, sprained his right middle finger during spring

training and went 0-1 with a 14.21 ERA during eight games of a rehabilitation assignment at Class A Everett and Triple-A Tacoma.

He signed with the Mariners in February 2021, then had Tommy John surgery and missed the season. Giles' last major league appearance was for Toronto at the New York Yankees on Sept. 15, 2020. He had 23 saves in 2019 and is 14-18 with a 2.74 ERA and 115 saves in seven seasons for Philadelphia (2014-15), Houston (2016-18) and Toronto (2018-20). Giles punched himself in the face after allowing a go-ahead, ninth-inning home run to the Yankees' Gary Sánchez in 2018.



Seattle Mariners pitcher Sergio Romo stands near the mound after giving up a two-run home run to Los Angeles Angels' Jared Walsh during the seventh inning of the second baseball game of a doubleheader, Saturday, June 18, 2022, in Seattle.

Associated Press

Elías has a 3.52 ERA in seven relief appearances and is 22-24 with a 3.96 ERA in 54 starts and 79 relief appearances with Seattle (2014-15, 2018-19, 2022), Boston (2016-17) and Washington (2019).

Padlo, 25, was traded from Seattle to San Francisco

for cash on April 27, then claimed off waivers from the Giants on June 11. He has appeared in 14 major league games over the past two seasons for Tampa Bay, Seattle and San Francisco and was 2 for 12 in four games for the Giants this year. □

On Golf: U.S. Open a reminder of what really matters in golf

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

BROOKLINE, Mass. (AP) — A week that began with Phil Mickelson speaking without saying hardly anything ended with Matt Fitzpatrick at a momentary loss for words in his proudest moment.

The U.S. Open was more than just a diversion from the disruption in golf. It brought meaning to the game.

"No words," Fitzpatrick said moments after a shot that will become part of U.S. Open lore. He hit 9-iron from behind a lip in a fairway bunker on the 18th hole at Brookline that settled 18 feet behind the pin and led to his one-shot victory.

"It's what you grow up dreaming of," he said. "It's something I've worked at so hard for such a long time. First win in America, and to do it in a major, there's nothing better."

Sure, there were a few money matters mentioned Sunday. Fitzpatrick won the U.S. Amateur at The Country Club in 2013, which came with a gold trophy and a chance to play in three majors. This title brought \$3.15 million from the largest purse in U.S. Open history.

Scottie Scheffler, the Masters champion and No. 1 player in the world, finished second with Will Zalatoris and earned more than \$1.5 million. That allowed Scheffler to set a single-season PGA Tour record at nearly \$12.9 million, easily breaking the mark Jordan Spieth set in 2015 — and there's still two full months to go.

Charl Schwartzel won \$4.75 million a week earlier competing in the Saudi-funded LIV Golf series. It was 54 holes with no cut, a 48-man field that featured only four players from the top 50 in the world ranking.

No one will ever mistake that for the toughest test in golf.

It took until the opening round of the U.S. Open for the attention to shift away from Greg Norman's money grab and put it back on the highest level of competition. But it was worth the



Matthew Fitzpatrick, of England, celebrates with the trophy after winning the U.S. Open golf tournament at The Country Club, Sunday, June 19, 2022, in Brookline, Mass.

Associated Press

wait. This U.S. Open delivered in so many ways.

The Country Club, hosting its fourth U.S. Open and its first since 1988, produced an ideal test to identify the week's best player. There was enough length on the par 4s, a par 3 that adjusted for elevation played under 100 yards and greens that only held the best shots.

It was the fourth straight year there was a first-time major champion at the U.S. Open, though Fitzpatrick was hardly a surprise. He knew Brookline as well as anyone from having made it through six matches to win the U.S. Open, and this was his fourth top-10 finish in his last five tournaments. He was in the final group at his second straight major.

The contenders featured four of the top seven players in the world on the weekend. It also had three

players in the top final top 10 who had to get through 36-hole qualifying just to get to the U.S. Open. One of them was Denny McCarthy, who made the cut on the number and a 68-68 weekend moved him all the way into a tie for seventh.

And this was one week after Rory McIlroy won the Canadian Open, golf's fourth-oldest national open, in a tense duel with Justin Thomas.

LIV Golf and its theme of being a "force for good" will return. The only thing swirling more than the wind over the weekend were more rumors about which players will be the latest to try to cash in.

Only four players who had been in the first LIV event made the cut from the 17 at the U.S. Open. The best finish came from Dustin

Johnson, who birdied two of his last three holes to tie for 24th.

Bryson DeChambeau wasn't in London — he signed up with the LIV Golf the weekend before the U.S. Open and will be outside of Portland, Oregon, at the end of the month. He finished his final round before the leaders teed off and had three birdies in his weekend rounds of 76-75.

As for Mickelson? He didn't even make it to the weekend. Not to worry. His next tournament in the LIV series doesn't have a cut, just a lot of money and little relevance.

Fitzpatrick, meanwhile, was looking forward to some time away from golf to decompress and wrap his head around the notion he's a major champion, the third from England in the last decade, joining Dan-

ny Willett (2016 Masters) and Justin Rose (2013 U.S. Open).

He is No. 10 in the world, a career-high, and can finally celebrate a victory in America. Zalatoris suffered another close call — his third runner-up finish in the last seven majors — while Scheffler has a Masters green jacket and a U.S. Open silver medal. It's been a pretty good year.

They meet up again in a month at St. Andrews for the British Open, the 150th staging of the sport's oldest championship at the home of golf.

It can't get here soon enough.

"You've imagined being in this situation you're entire life, and now I've basically been in it three times in a major," Zalatoris said. "That's why you play the game. There's nothing like it." □